

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PORG, NATO, ET, SO

SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON OGADEN CRISIS

REF: USNATO 2249

AS REFTTEL INDICATED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN MILITARY
SITUATION IN THE OGADEN ON PART OF NATO PERMREPS,
BELIEVE YOU MAY WISH DRAW ON FOLLOWING TALKING POINTS
TO BRIEF YOUR NATO COLLEAGUES AT MARCH 10 MEETING (OR
NEXT APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY) ON RECENT ETHIOPIAN ADVANCES.

1. THE JOINT ETHIOPIAN-CUBAN FORCE IN THE NORTHERN
OGADEN NUMBERS AS HIGH AS 80,000, INCLUDING SOME 7,000-
8,000 CUBANS OPERATING AS A MECHANIZED DIVISION (THERE

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ARE ABOUT 11,000 CUBANS IN ETHIOPIA, IN TOTAL). AFTER
INFLECTING LOSSES ON THE SOMALIS AROUND HARAR DURING
FEBRUARY, THE ETHIOPIANS AND CUBANS MOVED ABOUT MARCH 1
AGAINST JIJIGA. THE SOMALI DEFENDERS, NUMBERING PERHAPS
20,000, HAD FORTIFIED THE MARDHA PASS, JUST WEST OF THE
CITY, AND THE RIDGES NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE PASS.

2. BY MARCH 4, THERE WAS REPORTEDLY HEAVY FIGHTING NORTHWEST OF JIJIGA, AND THE NEXT DAY ETHIOPIAN FORCES BROKE THROUGH NORTH OF THE RIDGE AND OUTFLANKED THE DEFENDERS, WHO WITHDREW. THE ATTACKERS APPEAR TO HAVE

MOVED TO THE EAST AND TO THE SOUTHEAST, ALONG THE ROAD LEADING TO DAHAGABUR AND KEBRI DEHAR. THE WEATHER FOR THE ETHIOPIAN/CUBAN OFFENSIVE WAS APPARENTLY SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR TO ALLOW THE ATTACKERS TO FLY NUMEROUS AIR STRIKES AGAINST THE SOMALIS.

3. THE ATTACKING FORCES HAVE PROBABLY REACHED THE SOMALI BORDER OPPOSITE HARGEISA, BUT THERE ARE NO PRESENT INDICATIONS THAT THEY INTEND TO INVADE SOMALIA. IN ANY EVENT, THE ACTION MAY BE SHIFTING TO THE SOUTHEAST. THE ATTACKERS ARE ALSO REPORTEDLY IN THE PROCESS OF CLEARING THE DJIBOUTI-ADDIS ABABA RAILWAY LINE.

4. IN THE CENTRAL OGADEN, THE ETHIOPIAN AND CUBAN FORCES MAY MOVE AGAINST GODE. THE SOMALIS IN THE SOUTHERN OGADEN, CONCENTRATED AROUND FILTU, NUMBER FEWER THAN 20,000, OF WHICH ONLY HALF MAY BE REGULARS. THERE ARE NO PRESENT INDICATIONS OF A MAJOR ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THIS FORCE, BUT WE WOULD EXPECT THIS IN DUE COURSE.

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5. THE SOMALIS CONTINUE TO MINIMIZE THEIR LOSSES IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS. THEY CLAIM THAT THE MAJOR PART OF THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN DONE BY CUBANS (AND SOVIETS), INCLUDING PARATROOP DROPS WEST OF JIJIGA AND HELICOPTER AIRLIFT OF TANKS. WHILE THE CUBANS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN BOTH AIR AND GROUND COMBAT, THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES HAVE BEEN HEAVILY ENGAGED. WHILE THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF SOVIET TROOPS TAKING PART IN THE FIGHTING, THE FLOW OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FROM SOVIET SOURCES HAS CONTINUED UNABATED.

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